DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 212 584 SP 019 555

AUTHOR Stivers, Margaret
TITLE The Contract Classroom. Waukegan Behavior Analysis Follow Through Program.
INSTITUTION Waukegan Community Unit School District 60, Ill.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE [77]
NOTE 17p.; For related documents, see SP 019 557-558.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavioral Objectives; Behavioral Science Research; *Classroom Techniques; Contingency Management; Low Income; *Performance Contracts; Primary Education; Program Effectiveness; *Staff Development; *Student Motivation
IDENTIFIERS *Behavior Analysis Follow Through

ABSTRACT

This manual is designed to provide an overview of a Behavior Analysis Follow Through classroom management system known as "contracting." Behavior Analysis Follow Through was designed to meet the educational needs of low-income students in the kindergarten through third grade and was validated as an effective and exemplary educational program by the U. S. Office of Education. The program emphasizes the basic skills of reading, mathematics, spelling, and handwriting. This manual is of use to teacher trainers, lead teachers, teacher aides, parent assistants, and teacher helpers. Included is a definition of a contract classroom, an explanation of why contracts are used, and information on starting a contract classroom, setting contracts, and monitoring contract effectiveness. (CJ)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED212584

Waukegan Behavior Analysis Follow Through Program

The Contract Classroom

Prepared by

Margaret Stivers

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☑ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Harry S. Bowen

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SP 019 555

PREFACE

The Waukegan Behavior Analysis Follow Through Program was implemented at Carman Elementary School in the fall of 1969. Behavior Analysis Follow Through was designed by Don Bushell and his colleagues at The University of Kansas to meet the educational needs of low-income students in kindergarten through third grade. The model emphasizes the basic skills of reading, math, spelling, and handwriting. In 1977, Waukegan's program was validated by the standards and guidelines of the United States Office of Education and National Institute of Education as being an effective and exemplary education program for children from low-income families and approved for national dissemination by the Joint Dissemination Review Panel. Fund ng for the development as well as the dissemination was through U.S.O.E. Follow Through grants.

Brochures describing the Waukegan Behavior Analysis Follow Through Program are available to interested parties free of charge. Upon request, an Awareness Day will be arranged. Visitors will be provided with an introduction and orientation to the program, an opportunity to observe team teaching in the classroom, presentations on parent participation and comprehensive services, and the opportunity to ask questions.

Districts interested in adopting the program may obtain relevant information from the Project Director.

Table of Contents

Introduction i

What is a Contract Classroom? 1

Why Use Contracts? 2

How Should Contracts be Set? 3

How do you Start a Contract Classroom? 5

What Happens When Children Complete their Contracts? 6

What Happens When a Child Does Not Finish a Contract? 8

How Do you Know if Your Contract System is Effective? 9

Variations 10

Summary--Things Every Behavior Analysis Teacher Should Know About Contracts 11

Introduction

This manual is designed to provide an overview of a Behavior Analysis classroom management system known as "contracting". Included is a definition of a contract classroom, an explanation of why contracts are used, and information on starting a contract classroom, setting contracts, and monitoring your own effectiveness.

This manual should be of use to teacher trainers, lead teachers, teacher aides, parent assistants, and teacher helpers who are in training. It can also serve as a refresher for experienced staff members.

What is a Contract Classroom?

The contract classroom is a Behavior Analysis classroom that operates under a positive motivational system called contingency contracting. Contingency contracting may take many forms, but all are based on the same principle. Simply stated, a child may participate in a chosen activity contingent on completion of a predetermined amount of work. In keeping with Behavior Analysis philosophy, contingency contracting is a highly individualized classroom system. The amount of work required and the length of time spent participating in the reinforcing activity vary according to each child's skills.

Teachers use a contract form to record the amount of work that the teacher and child agree that the child will complete. The form may also include the child's chosen back-up activity. The contract is "negotiated" and signed by the student before the assigned work is begun. Upon completion of the contracted amount of work, the child raises his or her hand and the teacher checks to be certain that the assignment is complete and accurate, then signs the contract. The child proceeds to a chosen back-up activity in a designated area of the classroom.

Why Use Contracts?

As you probably recall, Behavior Analysis teachers assume that motivation does not just happen--it is taught. Thus a strong, positive motivational system is an essential component of a Behavior Analysis classroom.

The contract system, like the token system, provides incentives for children to complete more academic work than they would otherwise complete and to find the work a positive experience.

By providing children with a choice of interesting activities in exchange for completion of their contracts, teachers can make it rewarding for children to complete their work. Further, the probability that children will complete their work in the future is enhanced. The contract system also offers a way to increase children's sense of responsibility for their academic achievement and lays the groundwork for a mutually rewarding teacher/student relationship.

How Should Contracts be Set?

Contracts should be set on an individual basis and be responsive to each child's previous performance. It is hoped that each child will build up to a contract that requires completion of at least the amount of work necessary to keep "on target" so that he/she will achieve the year-end goal of at least one-year's growth in achievement.

Using Computer Feedback to Set Targets

Computer target information provided for each child can assist in setting contracts (see Jenkins, J. and Jackson, D. Computer Feedback in the Behavior Analysis Classroom, The University of Kansas Behavior Analysis Follow Through). Target information is derived from bi-weekly computer targets that are divided by ten to produce the amount of work to aim for each day. This may be too high for some children to start with, so you can start with a contract based on previous progress and then work up toward the target.

Using Previous Child Progress to Set Targets

To begin contracting on the basis of previous progress, it is necessary to determine how much work each child is completing in an earn period. Over a five-day period during which a standard token economy is used, a child's work rate can be measured and an average daily amount of work can be determined. If contracts are based on number of pages, then you can take an average of numbers

of pages that the child has been completing each day. This number of pages can be used as the child's first contract. Usually, later contracts should gradually increase the number of pages to be completed.

Contract lengths should vary from child to child and may vary from day to day as a reflection of pupil progress. This is a process of very fine tuning; it is important to constantly adjust each child's target in order to keep it most appropriate for that child's level. Contract systems fail if children are asked to do a great deal more than they are capable of accomplishing at that time. This results in their going too long without reinforcement and losing their positive motivation to work. If children are asked to do too little, they can become disruptive when thay have large blocks of free time.

As the school year progresses, children should gradually be taught to complete greater amounts of work each day. Contracts should be lengthened on the basis of child performance. If a child completes the same length contract several days in a row, then the contract should be lengthened a small amount.

How do You Start a Contract Classroom?

The children, in most cases, will already be accustomed to a token system, and, because a contract system is based on similar principles, the transition should not be difficult. Introduce the system to the children by announcing at the beginning of the earn that the class is ready to start a new motivation system. Explain the changes thoroughly, asking children questions in order to be sure that they are getting the ideas. Do not rely on only this verbal explanation, however. It is probably best to start out with a short contract that every child will easily meet. After this single demonstration, the children should know how the system works: "As soon as I finish this I can do that." After children know the mechanics of the contract system, assign each child the amount of work needed for staying on target or else assign a contract based on usual past performance.

If you have no information about each individual child's performance when you wish to begin contracting (for instance, the first week of school), then you can take the average amount that children of that grade level usually complete and use that as the basis for contracts after the initial easy contract(s). Based on individual differences, each child's contract can then be adjusted up or down, then gradually increased so that as many children as possible will have contracts that keep them "on target" or above.

What Happens When Children Complete Their Contracts?

How to Monitor Accuracy

A contract system should include a systematic check-out procedure that samples a child's work. A teacher can listen to a child read a few lines or watch the child complete a math problem. Children should be asked to check over their own work before they check out with the teacher. Test accuracy should be monitored carefully during check-outs and the teachers should ask several questions orally.

How to Monitor Completion

The teacher should fill in a form that notes that the child has completed a contract. Records of children's contract completions should be kept throughout the year. This monitoring is crucial since teachers need feedback as to the effectiveness of their system. With this monitoring, teachers will know whether their contracts are too long or too short and when it is time to increase contracts.

The Exchange

A positive consequence must immediately follow contract completion and check-out. Children must see the relationship between completing their contracts and engaging in activities that they enjoy. Children should be offered a variety of activities for completing contracts, and these activities should change from one

back-up time to the next. Exciting classroom learning centers that enhance skills which complement the skills taught in the curriculum could be set up. Participation in these learning centers could be made available to the children immediately following completion of their contracts.

More work in the curriculum should not follow contract completion unless children can go on to finish other contracts that will earn them extra time in back-up activities.

What Happens When a Child Does Not Finish a Contract?

During times when other children are spending, those children who have not yet completed their contracts work to finish them. Be careful that the children who are still working do not get too much attention during this time or they may learn to complete their contracts slowly in order to gain extra teacher attention.

If a child does not meet his or her contract several days in a row, the length of the contract should subsequently be shortened. Never change a contract once it has been agreed upon and the child has begun work. Otherwise the child will learn that it is not always necessary to complete assigned work before participating in back-up activities. The child may learn that he/she can convince the teacher to change the contract instead.

When children do not meet their contracts several days in a row, it may be that the assigned work is too difficult. It is a good idea to check curriculum placement.

It is also a good idea to check on whether the back-ups are exciting and rewarding to the children. You may need to inject more variety into the activities offered.

When the system is running smoothly, most of the children will usually complete their contracts in time to enjoy back-up activities.

How do You Know if Your Contract System is Effective?

Since the principle product of Behavior Analysis classroom teaching is child progress, child progress is the best measure of the effectiveness of any new system such as the contracting system. Examine your Bi-weekly Individual Progress Report chart carefully to see that your children are progressing at a steady pace. Hopefully, your median child is progressing at least two steps a month (may vary according to curriculum). If so, you are using the system very effectively.

Variations

1. Have children work for bonuses when they do more than their contracts. They could receive points to use at weekly auctions, tickets good for privileges or for visiting other classrooms or for a BIG special back-up.
2. Once children are working well, have them work on two-day contracts, then three-day contracts, etc.
3. Have children negotiate with you how much work they will do.
4. Have children record whether or not they finish their contracts and take a record of this home at the end of the day or week.
5. Use a contract system to contract good classroom behavior.

Feel free to try variations of your own. Share your ideas with staff members of other classrooms.

Summary--Things Every Behavior Analysis Teacher Should Know About Contracts.

1. Contracts are individually set at the appropriate level for each child.
2. Contracts are based on some measured work requirement.
3. Contracts should increase gradually as the year progresses and as children's skills improve.
4. Immediately upon completing a contract, a child may participate in a chosen back-up activity.
5. Back-up activities change daily.
6. Children's completion of contracts is monitored. Accuracy is checked and completion is recorded.

THE ACTIVITY WHICH IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS REPORT WAS SUPPORTED IN WHOLE OR IN PART BY THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE. HOWEVER, THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE POSITION OR POLICY OF THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION, AND NO OFFICIAL ENDORSEMENT BY THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION OR THE ILLINOIS OFFICE OF EDUCATION SHOULD BE INFERRED.